

STEPHEN M. LINSKY – WARD 2 ALDERMAN

JULY 2008 CONSTITUENT UPDATE

Hello Everyone.

A number of my colleagues recently submitted an op-ed piece recounting their efforts in respect to the process by which the Board deliberated the FY'09 budget.

In the past, the large part of budget deliberations typically consisted of the Board offering resolutions to the mayor recommending the restoration or addition of certain budget items. For the first time during my tenure on the Board, due in large part to the extraordinary circumstances brought about by the defeat of the override, a number of dedicated colleagues took on the responsibility to offer corresponding reductions to proposed budget line restorations, particularly those aimed at modest restorations of police and branch library services within the city budget and teaching positions within the school budget.

To be sure, the reductions proposed were understandably difficult ones. But a budget process should be iterative and collaborative in order to arrive at the best result. In fact, up until the point when the charter privilege was invoked, the process seemed to be moving in that direction. Even though a slight majority of the Board did not support the budget recommended by the mayor at the time of final passage, the remaining differences appeared capable of resolution, even within the condensed timeframe historically given to budget review.

It is now being suggested by those who acted to put the budget item over until the next regularly scheduled Board meeting that the process of arriving at a budget may continue to when the Board sets the tax rate later this fall. Many Board members have previously suggested that budget deliberations begin earlier in the budget cycle so that department heads and respective Board committees could together construct budgets aimed at achieving certain identified goals, both immediate and long term, based on extended revenue projections.

While the exact provisions of the budget in place at the start of this fiscal year remain unclear as charter requirements are reviewed, what is clear is that from this point forward the budget process may be forever altered for the better. I am prepared to start this process immediately.